1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE VILLAGE SETTING

TABLE I

162 Comparison of age-group distribution of Silwa Bahari and Egypt as a whole.[1]

Age group	*Percentage of Total Population*	
	Silwa	*Egypt*
under 5	15·0	13·3
5–9	11·9	13·9
10–14	11·2	12·0
15–19	11·1	8·5
20–29	14·5	15·2
30–39	13·9	14·6
40–49	10·5	10·1
50–59	6·1	5·9
60 and over	5·7	6·3
unidentified ages	0·2	0·2

361 Like many other villages in Upper Egypt, Silwa lies at the foot of the Eastern Plateau. This physical setting divides the villagers' world in Silwa into three distinct parts: the 'hills', the villages, and the fields. The barren [823] 'hills', with their rugged dark rocks, though a source of fear and apprehen- [241] sion to the children, are not so inhospitable for the adults who rely on the [134] salty clay (nitrous soil) found in these hills for use as land fertilizer. The [342] village itself is composed of compact houses built of sandstone, which is available in the environment. There is hardly any planning in the village scheme, except for three main streets cutting across the village from east 363 to west and another main street leading from north to south; the first three forming the main routes from the village to the fields. The rest of the by-ways between the houses are narrow and twisted and are occasionally interrupted by heaps of stones and rubble. After 1936, owing to the increase 362 of village population, a new space between the old village and the railway line was allotted free by the government for building purposes. Most of this space has been built upon and inhabited mainly by those married sons whose parental homes have not sufficient room for their accommodation. 361 However, the finest buildings in the village are the two mosques. With [346] whitewashed walls, elegant and dignified minarets, and a floor covered with mats, these mosques represent one of the most cohesive forces in the [182] life of the villagers – religion.

[1] Here the percentages in Silwa are worked out from the figures given for 1947, but those of Egypt from the figures of 1937. Thus one could assume that the percentages of age groups have not radically changed. On the other hand, there are no details about age groups in Silwa in the 1937 Census.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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life of the villagers—religion. Next to the mosques in appearance and cleanliness are some of the shops and stores. These must have a minimum standard of building requirements, according to official regulations. On the north side of the village stand the police station, the post office and the elementary school. As to the fields, they extend to the west of the railway road up to the Nile bank, where the water-pumping works, established in 1932, stands with its modern buildings and garden and electric light.

It is worth mentioning here that each of the ten villages constituting the administrative unit of Silwa has its own name and is separated from its neighbours, however close these may be, by a recognized boundary, e.g. a high mound, a valley, or a stretch of gravel or sand. Each of these villages (or two villages combined, as in the case of four of the villages) has its mosque and village saint tomb with a cemetery attached to it. In spite of the fact that all the villages attached to Silwa trace their origin to one ancestor, as will be discussed later, their spatial separation is associated with sub-divisions in their kinship relations.

The physical characteristics of the inhabitants of these villages show a considerable degree of homogeneity. With their dark skins and long heads, they seem to conform to the ancient Southern Egyptian type.[1] All the inhabitants of Silwa, however, take great pride in describing themselves as descendants of Arab stock related to the Prophet. They refer to their traditions and customs and even their dress as 'Arabian'. Whether their claim is true or not, the belief is of central importance as one of the cohesive forces in the village community, and it is the means by which the villagers, especially the older generation, distinguish their way of life from that of others.[2]

The rhythm of daily life in Silwa hardly varies. The crack of dawn witnesses the muazzin calling for morning prayers, youths and men, mounted on their donkeys or camels, call on each other to climb the hills to fetch the fertilizer. By sunrise, most men and boys are heading towards the fields with their cattle and tools; and by broad daylight the village seems

[1] A. Batrawi, who has studied the physical anthropology of Egyptians, maintains that there is some justification for the usual division of Egypt into Upper and Lower Regions as far as the cephalic index is concerned. The people of Upper Egypt have longer but narrower heads, and longer fingers, feet and forearms than those of Lower Egypt. His study of the living samples of modern Egyptian population from all over Egypt suggests that they conform more closely to the Ancient Southern type. Moreover, the distribution of blood groups in present-day Egypt shows that the mass of the population is very homogeneous and there are no significant differences in this respect between the Moslems and the Copts. 'The Racial History of Egypt, Part II— Relationships of the Ancient and Modern Population of Egypt and Nubia', in *Journal of Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXVI, 1946, pp. 131–55.

[2] Arab genealogies must be accepted with great caution. The notion of the Arabs as a conquering race, known for their gallantry, honour and power, played effectively on the minds of the indigenous stock of the fellaheen, who showed an earnest desire to be considered members of that race. Many fellaheen have succeeded in linking themselves to an Arab tribe. A. Ammar, *The People of Sharqiya* (Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University), pp. 13–21.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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tutors or in the Kuttab, the most important content in learning is the memorizing of the Koran as the basis of all other knowledge. The Kuttab has been, and is still in many remote villages in Aswan, the institution for religious learning, in which children learn part or the whole of the Koran, to be able to use this knowledge for their recitation and prayers, and the observation of correct ritual and prayer. The learning of reading and writing was always secondary to this all-important aim.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a great number of Kuttabs were financed by the revenue derived from charitable foundations called 'Wakfs'.[1] It was not until 1906 that these schools felt the impact of the central Government authority. In that year the Kuttab was organized, and a system of inspection and awards was worked out in accordance with which Kuttabs satisfying the official requirements could avail themselves of it. The aid was dependent upon daily instruction in the three R's, together with religious teaching, combined with a report of the Ministry of Education Inspector as to the general conditions of the Kuttab.[2] Later on, private awards were given to those boys who could satisfy the Inspector in an oral examination that they had learnt all the Koran by heart.

In Silwa and its neighbouring villages, there is only one aided 'Maktab', which is the official name for a recognized Kuttab, besides the other five unrecognized Kuttabs.[3] It is significant to note that four out of the six Kuttabs are attached to, or situated very near, a mosque, and the fifth is adjacent, and connected with a clan's guest house. Apart from the obvious connection between the mosque and religious learning in the Kuttab, such a proximity between the Kuttab, the mosque and the clan guest house enables the Kuttab boys to fetch water from the wells of the mosque or the clan guest house to be used for drinking, or for cleaning their wooden tablets. Out of the six Sheikhs running the Kuttabs in Silwa, three are blind. The Kuttab building usually consists of two rooms, with a raised dais in each room for the Sheikh. There is hardly any equipment, except the Sheikh's prayer mat, and the wooden tablets on which the boys write their Koranic assignment. The aided Kuttab is, however, an exception, as it has wooden seats, desks, and a blackboard, and is whitewashed. All the Kuttabs, except the aided one, are confined to boys. Only recently have some girls begun to attend the aided Kuttab, as attendance at it exempts both boys and girls from going to the compulsory school. In fact, throughout the history of Moslem Egypt the keenness on teaching girls the Koran has never been so strong as in the case of boys. MacDonald mentioned, however, that there are records of

[1] J. Hayworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*.
[2] Ministry of Education, *Code of Regulations Relating to Grants-in-Aid to Kuttabs*, No. 1161, May 1906.
[3] The Kuttab is usually referred to in Silwa by the name Khalwa—a word which literally means 'an isolated place for worship'.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

where. In default of compliance or in the case of the continued absence of the child, its parents or guardian are to be notified, and are liable to fine or imprisonment.

These were the main laws governing the compulsory school in Egypt until 1948, and the village school was on a half-day basis up to that year, boys attending school in the morning, followed by the girls in the afternoon.[1] There are usually four classes in the school building and three other rooms, one for the staff and two for stores. The number of school-children during the year 1950–51 was 138 in the four classes. According to the official records the numbers of children of the compulsory school age for the last seven years were:

TABLE VI

Children of the compulsory school age in Silwa (1944–51)

Year	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*
1944	154	77	87
1945	98	50	48
1946	98	45	53
1947	97	48	49
1948	131	60	71
1949	47	26	21
1950	61	38	23
1951	77	51	26[2]

The school, however, has only places for 150 children of all ages, and thus there is scope for some parents to compete for appeal either to the Omda or the headmaster at the beginning of the year to exempt their children from schooling or to withdraw them on grounds of lack of space.

As to the staff, the school has between three and four teachers; two of them at present are from the village itself, and the teachers are either the products of al-Azhar, the theological University, or the Elementary Training College (four to five years' course). The main requirement for entrance to the latter at the age of fourteen is the memorization of half

[1] It is indicative of the male-female ethos that boys should attend school first, and even at present when the school is full, and the classes are mixed, the boys sit in the front, with the girls at the back of the class. This reflects the different sex norm guiding the behaviour of the villagers in comparison with mixed education in the modern Egyptian Universities where, for instance, girl students sit in the front and the male students sit behind them, yet there is no real mixing in the lecture rooms. The front rows are normally reserved for girls, and the general tendency is for the girls to keep to these rows.

[2] The number of children eligible for compulsory school in 1949, 1950 and 1951 is comparatively low because of the very high death rate amongst both children and adults between 1941 and 1943 as a result of the malaria epidemic.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

there are three or four such buildings. Five times a day a *mueddin* chants the call to prayer from each mosque—from the minaret if there is one—and the resonant voices of these officiants may be heard far beyond the confines of the village.

An old graveyard often stands in the middle of a village, probably indicating the older boundary, the houses built beyond it having been erected later owing to the increasing population (see below, p. 72 and Fig. 32). A whitewashed building, crowned with

FIG. 10. WARP-THREADS ATTACHED TO PALM-TREES

a dome, stands, perhaps, on the highest point of the burial-ground, indicating the last resting-place of a sheikh, or holy man, or, at any rate, erected in his honour. Candles are usually lighted in the building on "the night of Friday"—*i.e.*, the night preceding the Friday—in commemoration of the sheikh. Such lights are, in most cases, the only illumination out of doors to guide the late wayfarer. These buildings, and there are often several in or around one village, are prominent architectural features, standing up with their whitewashed walls and domes above, and in glaring contrast to, the mud houses and hovels of the peasants.

Shops of different kinds are situated in the wider streets or lanes,

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

E 764 492 152

I mounted my donkey and accompanied them. The women went only a short way with us, and we left them, the hysterical sister in their midst, huddled together on the high road which led through the cultivation, still shrieking, smiting their faces, and waving their arms aloft. As we passed on toward the peaceful desert their cries grew fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last no sound broke the stillness save the occasional singing of a hymn by the men who formed the funeral *cortège*.

E 764 346 152 793

When we arrived at the gate of the monastery every one passed within the precincts, and the bearers carried the coffin into the church, setting it down in front of the curtain behind which was the altar. We all entered the sacred building, and a seat was offered to me close to the corpse. There was a large assembly of both Copts and Muslims, for the dead man was much respected by the followers of both religions among whom he had lived. We waited and waited, but still there was no sign of a priest. The men beguiled the time by talking and smoking, and, though I am sure it was not at all intentional, there was an extraordinary lack of reverent demeanour in those present. At last the priest arrived. The whole congregation immediately rose to their feet, and after the priest had shaken hands with me the others came forward in turns and kissed his hand. The lid of the coffin was now removed, and the body disclosed, wrapped in its white and green coverings. A very dirty cloth, on which was sewn a cross in green, was placed over the body, and candles were lighted and stuck to the sides of the coffin—six on each side and one each at the head and feet. This was accomplished by dropping some of the melting wax from the lighted candles on to the coffin and sticking the candles on to it. Two larger candles were fitted into large candlesticks placed on either side of the head of the coffin. These candlesticks were possibly of silver, but were in such a dirty state that it was impossible to guess with any certainty of what they were made.

F E 764 794 788 533 F E [537]

The service then began. It was very long, lasting for three hours or more! The priest was accompanied by the *'arîf*, as the man who leads the singing in a Coptic church is called. The latter was quite blind, and had a very resonant voice. When he sang he accompanied himself on a pair of cymbals. There was a great deal of this 'music,' and also recitations by the priest of portions of the Gospels. Furthermore, another man, whom he singled out from among those present, likewise read passages from the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

in which the man had died. Every one was censed as he passed toward the room, and one of the men, who accompanied him, carried the basin of water. The priest censed this room and sprinkled the whole of it, together with the mattress on which the dead had lain, with the water. This terminated the ceremony, and the priest and his *'arīf* departed for the desert monastery.

There is a common belief among the Copts of the peasant class that this sprinkling of the water in the house drives away the soul of the person who has died. This use of the water together with the incense is probably in origin a purificatory rite, cleansing the house and the inhabitants from the contamination of death, though such a belief, at any rate among the peasants, does not appear to exist at the present day.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

ground facing the house on which a mosque has lately been erected, had especially belonged to them. They were, of course, driven from this spot when the mosque was built, and since the introduction of motors and telephones, to which they strongly object, the road also had been made uninhabitable for them. They have therefore taken refuge in the Rest-house garden, where several people claim to have seen them. Three such appearances occurred during my residence.

One night, while my guard was enjoying a peaceful sleep, he

FIG. 134. THE REST-HOUSE AND ITS HAUNTED GARDEN

suddenly awoke in terror and saw towering above him a huge figure in the form of a man, which remained standing thus for a minute or two and then vanished. On another occasion the same guard saw an *'afrīt*, in the form of a dog, run round the garden, pass the windows of the Government offices overlooking it, and then vanish. About a week later, as my servant was crossing the garden on his way from the house to the kitchen, carrying a lighted lamp in his hand, the light was suddenly put out, though there was no wind, and presently he saw a shadow run along in the same direction as that taken by the dog. This, he said, when he recounted to me his adventure, was an *'afrīt*.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

MUSLIM SHEIKHS

The boy replied, " Because you have not built me a large tomb, and if you do not do so now I will go away to another village."

" O my beloved son," said his father, " to-morrow morning I will begin to build a fine tomb for you."

Young 'Ali held a paper in his hand, and he now presented this to his father, telling him that on it were written full directions for the building of the tomb, together with a specification of the exact

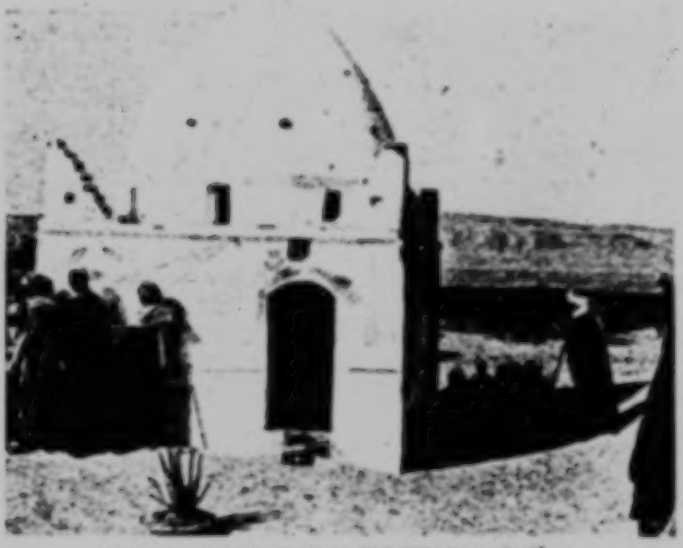

FIG. 139. DOMED TOMB OF THE SHEIKH HASAN 'ALI

spot where it was to be built and also as to where would be found a well of water, the locality of which was hitherto unknown.

The tomb was built with all speed, the workmen following the instructions written on the paper presented to old 'Ali by his son. A well was sunk on the spot indicated, and the water from it is excellent. The father states most emphatically that he was wide awake when his son appeared to him. When I questioned old 'Ali as to what he had done with the paper he told me that it had been lost by the workmen!

A small model of a boat is hung up in the sheikh Ḥasan 'Ali's tomb, as in the tombs of many sheikhs, the boat being called the sheikh's ferry-boat.

The mother of this sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

to climb down and join the festive crowds he found that he could not move, and that, when he tried to do so, his limbs were rigid and his whole body paralysed. On seeing the plight of the wretched man cries to the sheikh were immediately raised. People came with drums and tambourines, others sang and clapped their hands in rhythmic accompaniment to the music, till at last, after about two hours of such intercession, the man regained his power of locomotion, and so was able to move away.

FIG. 140. TOMB OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK
The external mural decorations are to be noted.

Some time after this exhibition of his power the sheikh 'Abdu l-Laṭīf appeared to a man in a village a few miles distant, telling him to build him a tomb there. The people of this village went in triumph to the sheikh's native place and exultantly told the inhabitants that their sheikh had now come to them.

The original tomb still exists, but it is in a very dilapidated state, and no doubt in course of time it will wholly disappear, unless something happens to revive the veneration formerly paid to the holy man in his native village. Meanwhile, the people of the village where 'Abdu l-Laṭīf's later resting-place is built hold a *mūlid* every year in honour of their acquired sheikh.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

THE FELLĀḤÎN OF UPPER EGYPT

Coptic saints receive the appellation Māri (Saint), and many of the beliefs and ceremonies associated with them are similar to those connected with the Muslim sheikhs.

A Coptic saint is usually buried within the precincts of a monastery or church, which may be dedicated to him. A popular saint may be honoured by the dedication of numerous monasteries and churches to his memory, in all of which he is equally venerated.

Sometimes the same saint may be claimed by Muslims and Copts alike, in which case the grave is often situated in an open space, possibly under the shadow of a tree or trees, the lower branches of which are covered with votive offerings contributed by the followers of both religions. With the Christians as well as with the Muslims candles are a favourite form of votive offering, and when the saint is claimed by the adherents of both faiths their candles may be seen burning side by side.

Many years ago, on a spot in the cultivation in Upper Egypt where a church dedicated to Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi now stands, there was a square plot of *ḥalfa*-grass. This site was claimed by the Muslims as the burial-place of a sheikh. There was a very poor man who lived in the town adjoining these fields and who acted as *farrāsh*[1] at the sugar factory in the same town. One night while he was sleeping he felt some one give him a kick. This naturally aroused him, and he saw standing beside him a man whose face and form were of great beauty, and who was clothed in white garments. This man told the poor *farrāsh* that he was Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi, that he wished him to build a church, and that he would himself indicate the spot on which he wished it to be erected. The saint told the *farrāsh* that he had called him to do this work instead of a rich man, as the latter would boast that by his riches he had built the church, whereas the saint himself would supply the poor man with all that he needed for the erection of the sacred building.

Māri Mīna then led the *farrāsh* to the patch of *ḥalfa*-grass in the fields, and told him to measure two metres from the edge of the *ḥalfa*-grass toward the east and two metres from the edge of the *ḥalfa*-grass toward the west. Then he was to dig the whole plot thus measured out to a depth of two and a half metres. When

[1] Literally, sweeper—the title given to servants employed by the Government to keep the Rest-houses clean, also to men employed in other public buildings in the same capacity.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

he had done this he would first find a very deep well, and westward from this he would find a large quantity of bricks, enough for the building of the church; while to the east he would find piles of white lime to be used in the construction of the building. To the east again of the lime, if he dug down to the depth of half a metre, he would find a heap of money, sufficient to pay for the entire building of the church, including the wages of the workmen employed. The saint told the *farrāsh* that he was to start at once to build the church, and that if he disobeyed his orders he would be killed. Then Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi vanished.

The *farrāsh* set to work to dig up the plot indicated, and found everything as the saint had told him, including the well, which he discovered first.

The church still stands on this spot, but the old *farrāsh* who built it has, of course, been dead for a long time, and since his day the building has been enlarged by one of the Coptic bishops. The well is still to be seen within the precincts of the church.

Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi is a very popular Coptic saint, and he is venerated not only by the Christians, but also by many of the Muslims, who have, so I was told, the greatest faith in him, and who often appeal to him for aid in time of need.

Egladiūs el-ʿAzab is a saint of great repute. Several churches in Egypt are dedicated to him, and his body lies with those of four other saints in a special edifice set apart for them in a large town in Upper Egypt. The bodies of these five holy men are still in a good state of preservation, though they have all been dead for a long period of time. Each body lies in a coffin. Egladiūs el-ʿAzab was very young when he died, having been killed, so I was told, by the Arabs because he was a Christian. He wears a wide ribbon of gold across his breast, and a gold earring in one ear. A special festival is held every year in his honour, for the due celebration of which the people make large quantities of bread, and bring cattle, which are slaughtered at the churches. The bread and meat are distributed among the poor, who flock in great numbers on these occasions to all the churches dedicated to him.

In a certain village in Asyūṭ Province there is a Coptic church dedicated to Māri Egladiūs el-ʿAzab. A man who lives close to the sacred building was, on one occasion, entertaining a Muslim friend who had arrived from another province. While they were engaged in conversation together the talk turned on to the subject

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XVI

SOME ANNUAL FESTIVALS

THE *Mūlid en-Nebi*, the annual celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, is of course the most important of all the festivals held in honour of Muslim saints. However, I shall content myself here with a description of some of the annual *mawālid* (plural of *mūlid*) held in honour of local village saints which I have attended myself during my six years' sojourn in Egypt.

The sheikh Umbārak is buried in a village in Middle Egypt, and a whitewashed domed building has been erected above his grave. One or two of the outside walls of his tomb are, as is customary, decorated with pictures descriptive of the pilgrimage to Mecca,[1] roughly sketched in red and blue paint, the remainder being inscribed with passages from the Ḳorān. Around the dome are small, what might almost be called clerestory windows, in each of which a lighted candle is placed every night. There is a female 'servant' attached to this sheikh, who is supposed to keep the tomb in order, receive the donations of devotees, and light the candles every evening. One wonders how she manages to carry out this work satisfactorily, as she is quite blind!

The *mūlid* held in honour of the sheikh Umbārak takes place in April and begins early in the afternoon, on the morning of which day similar festivals are inaugurated in certain neighbouring villages in honour of their own particular sheikhs.

At about two o'clock a large crowd collected in the vicinity of the sheikh's tomb, several people, chiefly women, seating themselves around it. The blind servant received donations from the faithful on behalf of the sheikh, part of the time having the sheikh's flag wrapped around her (Fig. 141). As the donors presented their gifts they recited the *Fātiḥah* in low and rapid tones. In the road which ran past the burial-ground, and in the adjacent palm-grove, the holiday-makers engaged in friendly conversation or indulged in various amusements (Fig. 142); and along the roadside booths

[1] See p. 245, Fig. 140.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

managed to secure a good photograph of them and of their bearers as they stood grouped under the sheikh's tree together with a few musicians and the inevitable crowd (Fig. 145).

These *mawālid*, when well conducted, are quite harmless, and are one of the very few pleasurable excitements enjoyed by the peasants. Most of those at which I have been present have been quite orderly, but much depends on the officer in charge of the district in which

FIG. 145. SHEIKH'S BANNERS AND THEIR BEARERS

they are being held. If he is neglectful, and does not see that order is kept and objectionable shows prohibited, the festivals can degenerate into anything but wholesome recreation for the people.

The modern Egyptian *mawālid* show striking resemblances to English fairs, especially as celebrated during the Middle Ages and on into the seventeenth century. These too were associated in every case with a saint, and also with trading. Our modern fairs, though often still named after the saints in whose honour they were originally held, have now lost their religious significance.

A monastery in Middle Egypt situated on the high-desert edge, which at this spot approaches close to the Yūsuf Canal, is one of a number dedicated to Māri Girgis, our St George (Fig. 146). The

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
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cliff on which the monastery is built towers up above the canal, while behind the building, and outside its surrounding walls, lie two fairly large cemeteries, one Christian and the other Muslim. The present building stands on an ancient site, and many of the old walls of the church and religious houses around it are of great thickness. A considerable portion of the old walls which surround the whole settlement still remain intact, and stories are told of the miraculous powers attributed to them. This monastery, as the massive character of the ancient walls indicates, must have served

FIG. 146. A MONASTERY DEDICATED TO ST GEORGE

as a stronghold for the Christians, who built it when religious wars raged between them and the Muslims. One or two pillars preserved in the more modern church are, so I was told, relics from an ancient building which has perished.

The annual festival held here in honour of St George attracts a great number of people, who flock to the monastery from considerable distances. It is interesting to observe that the crowds which congregate within the monastery precincts are composed of quite as many Muslims as Christians. Except for the fact that there was no *zikr*, the proceedings were much the same as those of the Muslim festivals described above. The same trading went on, and similar musical and other entertainments were provided. This *mūlid* continues for a week, and during the last few days horse-racing and displays of fancy riding take place. Many of the visitors

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Upper Egypt

Ancient Egypt MR5

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold of a new house and at the installation of a new engine or water-wheel. With this may be compared the slaying of victims—an ox and a goose—at the ceremony of laying the foundation of an ancient Egyptian temple.[1]

The unwillingness to save a drowning person mentioned on pp. 238 f. may be the last remains of an ancient belief that to be drowned was to "do the pleasure of Rē'," and that by being drowned a person was divinized, a belief to which Herodotus refers somewhat vaguely.[2] Professor Griffith wrote a very illuminating article on this subject some years ago in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*,[3] and my brother, Dr A. M Blackman, has also dealt with it at some length in his *Temple of Dendûr*.[4] It is, perhaps, to be remembered in this connexion that, according to more than one account, Osiris himself met his death by drowning.[5] Possibly the water-spirit, who apparently claimed (in the end successfully ?) the foredoomed Prince,[6] is to be compared with the *'afrīt* that the modern *fellāḥīn* suppose to be claiming one who is drowning.

It is interesting to note that virtue was evidently attached to onions in ancient as it is in modern times (p. 261), for persons who took part in the procession round the walls of Memphis at the annual festival of Sokar, the funerary god of that city, had onions hung round their necks.[7] People also tied onions round their necks on the night preceding this festival.[8]

The love of listening to stories was certainly no less strong in the ancient Egyptians than it is in their descendants, as is shown by the number of folk-tales preserved to us from all periods. The existence of these stories points also to there having been professional story-tellers in antiquity as at the present day (pp. 268 ff.).[9]

[1] W. von Bissing and H. Kees, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re*, vol. ii (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. I, Fig. 2.

[2] ii, 90.

[3] Vol. xlvi, pp. 132 ff.

[4] Cairo, 1911, pp. 82 f.

[5] A. Erman, "Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. xliii, 1911, pp. 926 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 25, 41.

[6] T. E. Peet, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. xi, pp. 228 f.

[7] S. Sharpe, *Egyptian Inscriptions from the British Museum and Other Sources* (London, 1837–55), Part II, p. 78.

[8] H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1867–80), p. 295; *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum* (Leipzig, 1883–91), p. 1144; J. Duemichen, *Altaegyptische Kalenderinschriften* (Leipzig, 1866), Pl. XXVI.

[9] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. xxix; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, pp. 30 f.

F 361 they build themselves a suburb on the outskirts of a town, as at Minia for example, it bears exactly the same appearance.

Some distinction may be made between villages according to their relative importance. There are the district capitals (*markaz*), the market towns and the centres of pilgrimage; these are big villages or townlets with more business, more movement and more institutions than the others (bank, court, police station, railway station); but no fellah centre has many of the amenities of a town. At the other end of the scale come detached but still dependent hamlets, such as the *'ezbas* of the big landowners and the Bedouin settlements (*nag'*) on the edges of the cultivation.

F 511 184 The standard of living is practically invariable everywhere, and to study an average village is to know all the rest.

Let us choose a village at random and look, before we enter it, for any signs of communal life which can be seen from its outskirts.

F 361 346 In Europe it is often said that the church building gives its character to the village. In Egypt too the mosque (or the Coptic church) is the largest and most solid building, but there is nothing remarkable about it in point of architecture. Even if it has a minaret or a bell-tower, it gives no special character to the village, for it rarely rises above the poverty and mediocrity of its surroundings.

C F 779 95% of the fellaheen are Moslems. There are about a million Copts, 40,000 of whom are Catholics. They live together with the Moslems in the same villages, each group following its own faith.

F 779 771 The Moslem fellaheen, among whom neither women nor children are counted, observe as faithfully as possible the five fundamental precepts of the Koran: belief in one God, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. This much at least they know.

F 782 796 516 Of their belief in God something will be said later on. Prayers they say after ablutions in the evening, and several times on Friday. When they hear the call of the *muezzin* they leave the women and children in the fields, and go off to the mosque, or more often to a cleared space used as such, a square of beaten earth at the water's edge surrounded by a low wall. There they pray together, or at least go through the prescribed gestures. Squatting on the ground or on

231
343 in bigger villages the house of a notable or a successful merchant.

251 Within easy reach of the village on the side facing the
343 fields are the *shoonas* or depôts for storing crops, together with offices and officials' houses, and the *ilzamiya* or compulsory school.

344 Now let us go inside the village. In a clean and access-
485 ible corner, better cared for than all the other houses, there may be sometimes a "rest-house" or *madyafa* of two or three rooms, kept by the *omda* for the use of Government officials and travellers. This building belongs either to the Irrigation Department or to the Ministry of the Interior. There are Government rest-houses in about 400 villages.

361 Let us penetrate to the heart of the little town. What
363 we have seen up to now has given us no idea of what to expect. All is dust and disorder. There is no plan or system, and not a single straight line. The only thing in common with a modern city is the congestion due to lack of building space. The alleys, strewn with dung and rubbish, are so narrow that three people cannot walk abreast; they are less than two yards wide. There is no hope of driving through, and hardly of riding through on donkey-back. However, in some places where there is more movement, the buildings are of necessity less crowded, as in front of the *omda's*
[346 house or the school, and in the business quarter, which
366] contains the little open shops of the tailor, the grocer, the potter, and the weaver, and, if the village is large enough, a café. There are many villages without a single shop, so that it is impossible to buy anything at all, except from an
[443] occasional pedlar. In some villages the system of barter is still in use, corn, for example, being exchanged for salt.

491 No main road ever goes through a village as in England
363 or France. The hamlet is a compact mass of buildings,
361 standing aside from the road, canal or river; wheeled vehicles cannot enter it. That is why so few foreigners, missionaries and, indeed, well-to-do Egyptians except the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, know anything of its inner life. To get a picture of
622 this, we must first describe the leading characters.
647 We have already met the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, who link the fellah to the Government, and the *nazir*, his link with the
443 landowner. Another connection with the civilised world is
563 provided by the *baqqal*, often a Greek, who performs the

361 185 654 rows there is a street six yards wide, so that sunlight can penetrate into every dwelling.

361 185 654 342 The houses are of red brick, with concrete ceilings, and the floors inside are raised a foot above street level. The roof is about thirteen feet from the ground. Twenty of the houses are two-roomed, with a yard inside and a shed for cattle. Ten larger houses have three rooms, with a hall and outhouses. These are occupied by two families each, usually those of a father and his son.

[252 515] Six baking-ovens have been built outside the housing-area, so that the smoke may not trouble the inhabitants. They are used by all the families in turn. There are also six shower-baths, four for men and two for women, together with laundry facilities.

[346] The village hall will hold seventy people; it is used for feasts, marriages and funerals. The mosque covers about 600 square feet. The school, which follows the syllabus [347] for compulsory elementary education, is open to boys and girls. Shops have been opened in order that the people may buy what they want on the spot, and there is a great enclosure with six depots for storing the various crops, fodder for the animals, and agricultural implements.

[312] Water to fill the tanks is drawn from a well by a pumping machine. But this was an expensive experiment, costing L.E. 10,000, and could not be copied by private persons. Something more economical had to be found, which without sacrificing public health would be better adapted to the habits of the fellaheen. In 1935 the Royal Agricultural Society laid a new experiment before the landowners. Twenty houses of different kinds were built in blocks of four, separated by twenty-foot roads. Here the walls are of unbaked brick, and the roof of wood. There are two rooms about fifteen feet by twelve, a small yard, and an inside oven. Each dwelling costs L.E. 25 as against the L.E. 125 of the first plan.

654 341 361 The Government, for its part, has decided to build a model village in each *mudiriya*, beginning with the rebuilding of Mit Fares in Lower Egypt, which was destroyed by fire. The plan allows for houses of one or two stories with drinking-water and interior drainage; wide streets lined with trees; in the centre a mosque, a school, and a hall for meetings; and on the outskirts a market-place for the

expense, which amounts to about L.E. 70. These *gallabiyas* are not distributed anyhow, but fitted individually by the *nâzer's* wife, according to height and taste. At the Bairam festival there is a general distribution of meat, four pounds to a person, which costs about L.E. 40. Fat is also given to those who have no *gamoossa*. The fruit crop of the orchard is shared out at intervals. Whenever a child is born, a set of baby-clothes is provided.

When a fellah gets into debt, the *nâzer* advances him what he needs, without any trickery. The man pays it off by days of work.

Drinking-water is supplied to all from a pump at the entrance to the *'ezba*. A dozen lavatories and two shower-baths have been set up near the mosque.

This beautiful mosque, built by the Christian landowner, who also provides for an *imam*, brings together the menfolk of the *'ezba* and its surroundings. A *kuttab* was attached to it, but this has been closed since the opening of an *ilzamiya* school in the next village.

Fellaheen who go sick are cared for by the *nâzer*, who has by practice become something of a doctor, or sent to the Government doctor at Mit Ghamr. The wife of this kindly manager, when she was there, used to take care of the people herself, wash their eyes, and give them clothes and good habits too. For twenty-four years she stood at her husband's side.

When she died, they showed that fellaheen are not incapable of gratitude. They discovered by childish tricks, in spite of efforts to keep the truth from them, that she was seriously ill in Cairo. Thirty of them piled into a couple of taxis and drove off to the hospital. It was like a public demonstration, people said. Later, when they saw the *nâzer* and his children coming back in mourning from the cemetery, their grief was as spontaneous as it was general.

This mother left her daughter an example to follow. And follow it she does, with her gentleness and good temper and her mastery of Arabic. It is easy to see how much they love her, those unloved peasants.

This experiment in social justice has not made either the owner or the *nâzer* any the poorer. The estate is one of the most productive in Egypt, and all its products have won prizes at agricultural exhibitions.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Copts MR10

F 113

See E.W. Lane : MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MODERN EGYPTIANS : Everyman Library.

F [192] 63a. *T.*—There seems no justification for connecting the Arabic RIF with the French RIVE.

64. In the United States, however, for example in Tennessee, cotton carnivals take place. In the town of Memphis exhibitions and processions with carts are organised for four days in May. The first festival took place in 1931, and very soon the carnival became an extremely popular holiday.

F [527 171]

See J. Taylor : TENNESSEE TABLEAUX, in THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE for May 1939.

65. Winifred Blackman : THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT : Harrap, 1927.

66. *T.*—Retranslated from the French, which gives no reference.

67. Muhammad El-Kolaly : ESSAI SUR LES CAUSES DE LA CRIMINALITÉ EN EGYPTE : Librairie de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris, 1939.

F [563 443 186] 68. KHAWAGA is the usual term for a Christian merchant, generally a Greek, but in Upper Egypt often a Copt. In Cairo and Lower Egypt it is the usual word for a European. Its use implies a certain respect, and even servility.

C F [175 346] 69. *T.*—The early hermits of the Egyptian deserts were first assembled into monastic communities by St. Pachomius about 320 A.D. near the existing village of Faw, just south-west of Nag' Hammadi in Upper Egypt. There are some remains of a church, which was probably founded by him. His name, in the form BAKHOUM, is still very common in Coptic families.

See A.J.B. in THE ANCIENT COPTIC CHURCHES OF EGYPT.

70. REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION ON THE DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1941-2.

71. Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, December 1939.

F 191 72. *T.*—Egyptian colloquial Arabic is as far from the language of the Koran as Italian is from Latin. In theory the written style of modern Arabic is Koranic,

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

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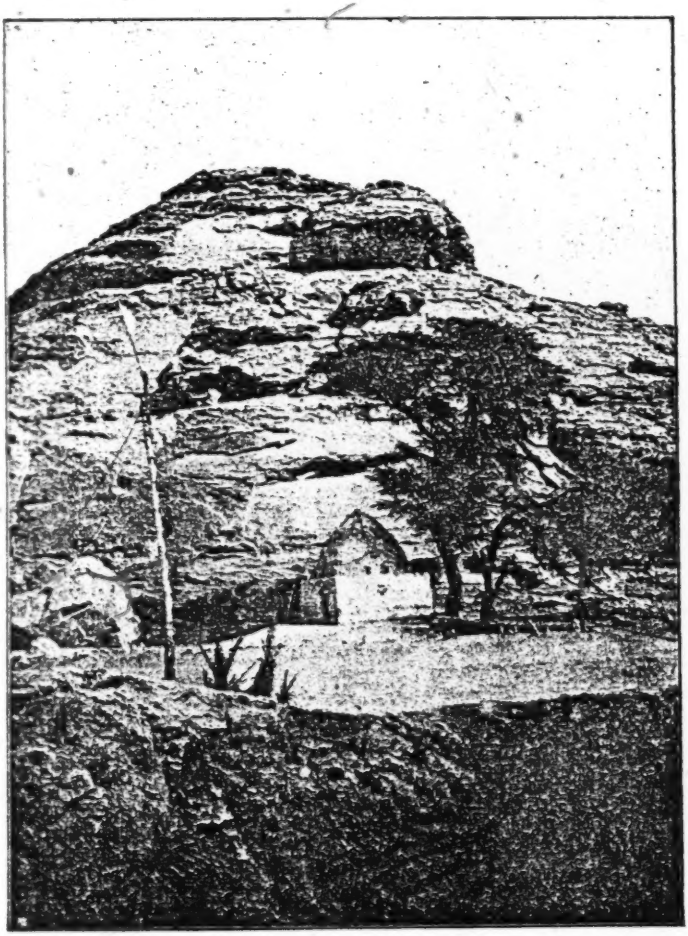

Photograph by Freiherr von Gruenau.

Grave of a Saint.
(at Ellesiye in Nubia.)

[P. 3]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

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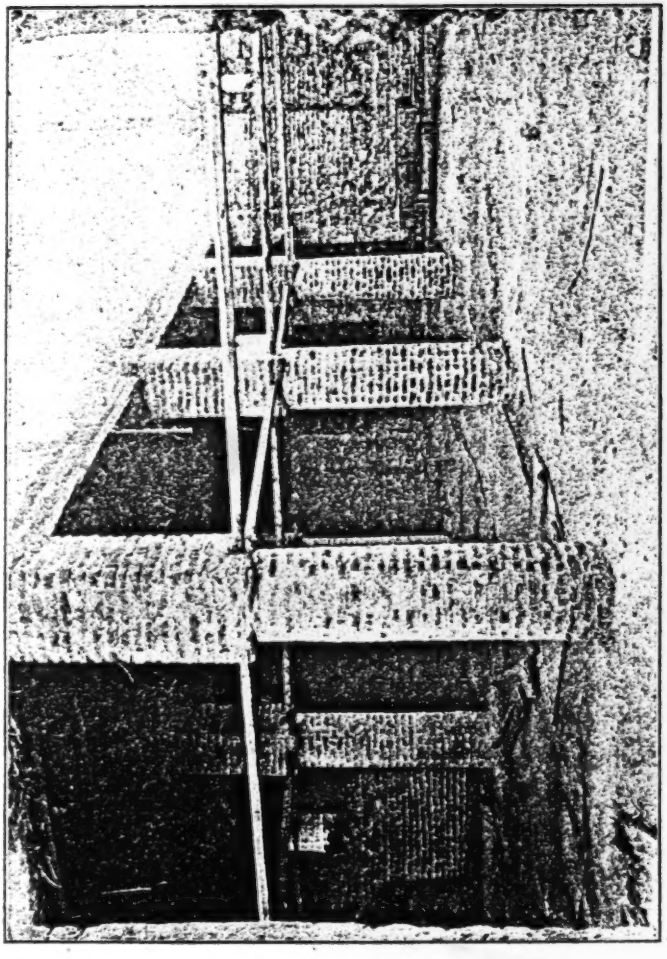

Photograph by L. Borchardt.

Interior of a Village Mosque.
Ehnasye in Middle Egypt.